
From: Barry Mitchell [mailto:barrymitchell@verizon.net]
Sent: Tuesday, March 03, 2009 10:23 PM
To: MLPAComments
Subject: MLPA SoCal Closures

Hi,

My name is Barry Mitchell and I am very concerned about the proposed MLPA closures in Southern California.

I have been a fisherman in southern California since 1971, and have been diving for game since 1985.

I'm sure you are getting a thousand comments that all read the same to you. When you take away someone's rights, you should expect it. Anger. You also better have exhausted all other avenues before doing it.

I think that that is my biggest problem with the MLPA initiative. From my perspective, extreme measures are being taken to 'fix' a marine life population crisis, when the existing fish and game regulations are not significantly changed in the last 10 years. Unless all measures have been attempted and failed (reduction in limits, closed take on threatened species etc.) there is no grounds to close the use of public waters. From my observations, fish populations if anything are better than they were 20 years ago. Halibut are far more prevalent, and lobster populations seem to be holding up despite intense commercial pressure. If slow growing rockfish are the concern, then specific restrictions should be implemented to prevent unsustainable take. Once again, this is already under the responsibility and control of the fish and game commission and can be done without closing public waters.

Impacts - here will be my direct impacts to the local economy if the areas I fish and dive are closed:

I dive almost every week in Laguna beach - from the shore to take game. If it is closed to the take of game, I will no longer dive there, or possibly anywhere. I will no longer patronize the local businesses there. I have told my local dive shop in Huntington Beach that no hunting equates to no spending. I also regularly fish on sportfishing boats (both open party and charter) from Long Beach, and Newport Beach. Marine life closures that eliminate productive areas at Catalina, and crowd the remaining fishing population into barren areas will force an end to that hobby, and the related spending. I purchase significant quantities of fishing tackle, and make custom fishing rods currently. All of that will end if new closures push the fishing community into small unproductive areas. That is quite a price to pay.

The biggest impact of closing California waters to fishing and diving is that you will lose generations of people who care intensely about the ocean and marine life. Fishermen and divers ARE the people that have the largest stake in having well managed game populations. We expect our fish and game commission to use it's current authority to limit take to a sustainable level. The special interest groups that are pushing this initiative cannot say the same. If their interest was to truly expand the marine populations in southern California, they would be focusing on turning the vast sand wastelands in our area into artificial reefs. That increases fish populations. I think their proposals are motivated more by politics, power, and unfortunately money.

Thank You,
Barry Mitchell